



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Brazilian national sentenced to eighteen months for his role in filing false immigration claims

BOSTON—A Brazilian national who was in this country illegally was sentenced today in federal court after pleading guilty to fraud with respect to immigration documents.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan and Bruce M. Foucart, special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in New England, announced that Marcelo Coutinho, age 46 of Peabody, was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment.

On June 6, 2006, Coutinho pled guilty to a three-count information, which charged him with knowingly filing fraudulent immigration documents in violation of 18 U.S. C. 1546(a). Coutinho was originally charged by complaint along with co-defendant Odeni Moreno. At the June 6, 2006 plea hearing, the government proffered the following facts that formed the basis for Coutinho's guilty plea: In Nov. 2005, agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") received information that Coutinho and Moreno were charging illegal aliens \$4,000 apiece to file applications for "Newman" benefits. The "Newman" benefit applied to illegal aliens who lived in the United States between May 5, 1987 and May 4, 1998 – a period when amnesty was granted – but who were wrongly denied the opportunity to apply for such amnesty. Coutinho and Moreno completed and filed numerous applications, fraudulently filling them out so that the applications appeared to qualify for the "Newman" benefits when in fact they did not. In addition, Coutinho fraudulently filed for a "Newman" benefit on his own behalf. In doing so, he submitted a false affidavit purportedly from a person whom he knew and who claimed Coutinho had been in the United States for the requisite period of time to qualify for the "Newman" benefit. ICE agents learned that the affidavit was false and that the affiant in fact did not even know Coutinho.

Moreno's case is pending and set for trial on Nov. 13, 2006.

The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Leah B. Foley of Sullivan's Major Crimes Unit.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.